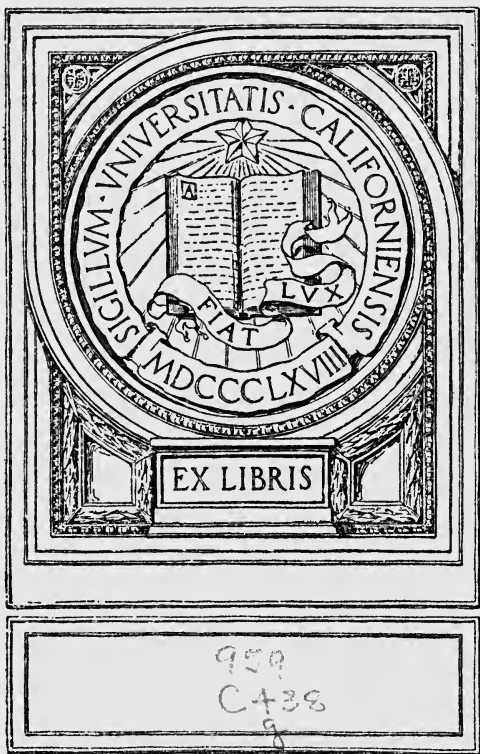


GREEN DAYS
AND BLUE DAYS
PATRICK R. CHALMERS

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GREEN DAYS
AND BLUE DAYS

“Of green days in forests and blue days at sea.”

—R. L. STEVENSON.

GREEN DAYS
AND BLUE DAYS

PATRICK R. CHALMERS

MAUNSEL AND COMPANY, LTD.
DUBLIN AND LONDON



SECOND EDITION
Being the second thousand copies.

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To
E. M. C.

323433

The following verses have, with one exception, appeared in PUNCH or the WESTMINSTER GAZETTE. To the Proprietors of the one and the Editor of the other I beg to express my thanks for their kind permission to reproduce them in book form.

P. R. C.

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TIMES AND SEASONS

PAN-PIPES

PAN—did you say he was dead, that he'd gone,
and for good—

Gone with the Dryads and all of the shy forest
faces ?

Who was it then plucked your sleeve as you
came through the wood,

What of the whisper that waits in the oddest of
places ?

Pan of the garden, the fold,

Pan of the bird and the beast,

Kindly, he lives as of old,

He isn't dead in the least !

PAN-PIPES

Yes, you may find him to-day (how the reeds
twitter on,
Tuneful, as once when he followed young
Bacchus's leopards) ;
Stiffer he may be, perhaps, since our moonlight
has shone
Centuries long on his goat-horns—old Pan of
the shepherds !

Brown are his tatters, his tan
Roughened from tillage and toil,
Pagan and homely, but Pan—
Pan of the sap and the soil !

Find him, in fact, in the Park when the first
crocus cowers ;
Cockney is he when it suits him, I know that
he knocks his
Crook at my window at times o'er sixpenn'orth
of flowers,
Gives me his blessing anew with my fresh
window-boxes !

PAN-PIPES

Piping the leaf on the larch,
Piping the nymphs (in the Row),
Piping a magic of March,
Just as he did long ago !

APRIL IN "THE STREET"

APRIL of the shining tresses,
Tearful mouth, and laughing eyes !
Where the budding wildernesses
Wait the swallow's glad surprise,
Where the slender
Larch's tender
Green is new and neat,
Most folk set you ;
Yet I've met you
In Throgmorton Street !

When the City pigeon's cooing
Takes a soft domestic note,
When the daffodil is doing
Duty in the broker's coat,
When through highway,
Court and byway,
Gusts and sunshine range,
And the racing
Clouds are chasing
Over the Exchange ;

APRIL IN "THE STREET"

What if rates be flat or firmer,
What if prices fill or back,
If I hear your sunny murmur
Of a four days' Easter slack,
Of absconding,
Vagabonding
From the Street's grim aisle,
While its chill stones,
Mammon's millstones,
Cease to grind awhile !

THE VAGABOND

THE wind is in the wood,
The sap hath stirred
Blue flowers in multitude,
And song of bird ;
And, though her day hath been,
Last summer's fern
Is red among the green,
For to discern !

What scribe am I, I say,
To mope within,
Whenas the common's gay
With yellow whin,
When sun and shower and sod
In ancient plan
Do praise the hornéd god
Arcadian ?

For I must be astir
With scrip and staff,

THE VAGABOND

To hear the woodpecker
In April laugh,
Or go with jest and rhyme
A-journeying
By Tamis' flood from Prime
Till Nones doth ring !

Where lusty poplars bend
The path is free ;
I'll tread it with a friend
For company,
Then rest and drink a glass
If they should brew
Ale at the " Dragon " as
They used to do !

BOND STREET

LAVENDER fresh are your looks
Bond Street, in May-time ;
London that's laid down her books,
London in playtime ;
Sunlit eleven o'clock,
Jack, ay, and Jill,
Furbelow, feather and frock,
Fashion and frill !

Lilac'd and lawned go your girls,
So many Graces,
Soft as the dawn, or the pearls
Caught in their laces ;
Lo, it was Celia laughed
Silver afar ;
Here breathed a violet waft,
There a cigar !

Men who are fêted and fed,
Folk who've come croppers,

BOND STREET

Men who fill lions with lead,
 Surbiton shoppers ;
Thus does the whirligig go
 Blithe as a bell ;
Soothly it seems that your show
 Runs rather well.

Yet on this Monday you've more—
 How shall I term it ? —
Éclat than ever before,
 Yes, I affirm it ;
Why so, I hardly can say,
 Saving 'tis that
Dolly is up for the day,
 Getting a hat !

EUSTON

Now, when the sportsman is flitting from mar-
ket and Mammon,
Now, when the courts, swept and garnished,
stand silent and lone,
Now, with her challenging grouse, and her sea-
silver salmon,
August, of mountains and memories, comes to
her own ;
Would you gaze into the crystal, and see the
long valleys,
Braes of the North, and the rivers that wander
between,
Craggs with whose coating the tint of the
ptarmigan tallies ?
Come up to Euston to-night about 7.15.

There, if you've got to make shift with a fort-
night at Margate,
Humbly content with the codling you catch from
the pier,

EUSTON

Making the booth's mere mechanical rabbit your
target,

There,—if your “heart's in the highlands a-
chasing the deer”—

Shall you slip past, all unchallenged, the magical
wicket,

Portal that opens at will on to heather and
streams ;

No need to bother for berth or for booking of
ticket,

When you would sojourn a space in the Kingdom
of Dreams.

Come, then, and stand on the platform, and see
through the arches,

Full of the evening that flushes the chimneys
with light,

Gold-burnished rails that run out to the pines
and the larches,

See the long corridor carriages busking for flight;
Board them in fancy, and then, when the twi-
light grows deeper,

Speed through the moon-mantled Midlands—
by fell and by firth,

EUSTON

Wake with your tea, in the smooth-swinging
rush of the sleeper,
When the white glamour of morning is pale
over Perth.

So, spite of luggage and crowds and of engines
that whistle,
Over the riggings—in spirit—once more you'll
descry,
On to the perilous butts, where the batteries
bristle,
Blotting the heather, the well-driven coveys
come by ;
Bracken and blaeberry, murderous midges that
bite you,
Summits that stand to the sunset, tremendous
and stark,—
Come up to Euston, for lo, it has dreams to
requite you,
Till the last tail-light has twinkled, and gone in
the dark !

LAVENDER'S FOR LADIES

LAVENDER's for ladies, an' they grows it in the
garden ;

Lavender's for ladies, and its sweet an' dry an'
blue ;

But the swallows leave the steeple an' the skies
begin to harden,

For now's the time o' lavender, an' now's the
time o' rue !

“Lavender, lavender, buy my sweet lavender,”

All down the street an old woman will cry ;

But when she trundles

The sweet-smellin' bundles,

When she calls lavender—swallows must fly !

Lavender's for ladies (Heaven love their pretty
faces) ;

Lavender's for ladies, they can sniff it at their
ease,

LAVENDER'S FOR LADIES

An' they puts it on their counterpins an' on their
pillow-cases,
An' dreams about their true-loves an' o' ships
that cross the seas !

“Lavender, Lavender, buy my sweet lavender,”
Thus the old woman will quaver an' call
All through the city—
It's blue an' it's pretty,
But brown's on the beech-tree an' mist over all !

Lavender's for ladies, so they puts it in their
presses ;
Lavender's for ladies, Joan an' Mary, Jill an'
Jane ;
So they lays it in their muslins an' their lawny
Sunday dresses,
An' keeps 'em fresh as April till their loves
come 'ome again !

“Lavender, lavender, buy my sweet lavender,”
Still the old woman will wheeze and will cry.
Give 'er a copper
An' p'raps it will stop 'er,
For when she calls lavender summer must die !

POMONA

THE hive's full of honey, the steading of stacks,
The stubbles are bare to the sunshine again,
There's a wind in the branches that eddies and
backs

That whispers of Autumn, that whispers of rain.
The orchards are mellow with red globes and
yellow,

The matronly months of fulfilment are now,
So now must we turn to their goddess, and
yearn to

Pomona, beloved of the fruit-burdened bough !

The swallows have gone from the eaves and
the spire,

From the garden has faded the pomp of high
June,

But crimson's the maple, the woods are a-fire,
And filling with woodcock beneath the new
moon ;

POMONA

Folk say that she lingers with berry-stained
fingers
On field-paths that clamber by cottage and
croft,
Pomona, dear maiden, whose brown arms are
laden
With fruit and with fullness for cellar and loft !

Oh, some may build altars for Dian, and some
For Cyprian Venus who rose from the sea,
And some for the Muses the learned and glum,
But no such fine ladies for mortals like me.
No doubt they are charming ; I'd find them
alarming ;
And when did they offer to quench a man's
thirst ?
Pomona, provider of tanged autumn cider,
Our lady of apples, she's easily first !

.
Since you'd offer libation, this method is mine—
Go up by the footpath (the high roads I shun),
And ten miles of walking will show you her
shrine,
An inn with a settle that faces the sun ;

POMONA

And absent if She be, an apple-cheeked Hebe
Shall pour you her nectar that winks and that
 swirls ;

She's brown and she's smiling, she's plump, she's
 beguiling,

Perhaps not the goddess, but one of her girls !

ROUNABOUTS AND SWINGS

It was early last September nigh to Framlin'am-
on-Sea

An' 'twas Fair-day come to-morrow, an' the
time was after tea,

An' I met a painted caravan adown a dusty lane,
A Pharaoh with his waggons comin' jolt an'
creak an' strain ;

A cheery cove an' sunburnt, bold o' eye and
wrinkled up,

An' beside him on the splashboard sat a brindled
tarrier pup,

An' a lurcher wise as Solomon an' lean as fiddle-
strings

Was joggin' in the dust along 'is roundabouts
and swings.

"Goo'-day," said 'e ; Goo'-day," said I ; "an'
'ow d'you find things go,

An' what's the chance o' millions when you runs
a travellin' show ?"

ROUNDABOUTS AND SWINGS

"I find," said 'e, "things very much as 'ow I've
always found,

For mostly they goes up and down or else goes
round and round."

Said 'e, "The job's the very spit o' what it
always were,

It's bread and bacon mostly when the dog don't
catch a 'are ;

But lookin' at it broad, an' while it ain't no
merchant king's,

What's lost upon the roundabouts we pulks up
on the swings !

"Goo' luck," said 'e ; "Goo' luck," said I ;
"you've put it past a doubt ;

An' keep that lurcher on the road, the game-
keepers is out ;"

'E thumped upon the footboard an' 'e lumbered
on again

To meet a gold-dust sunset down the owl-light
in the lane ;

An' the moon she climbed the 'azels, while a
nightjar seemed to spin

That Pharaoh's wisdom o'er again, 'is sooth of
lose-and-win ;

ROUNABOUTS AND SWINGS

For “up an’ down an’ round,” said ’e, “goes all
appointed things,
An’ losses on the roundabouts means profits on
the swings !”

THE MUTINY YEAR

IN the lumber-room I rummaged for some papers
out of place,

When I came—among the cobwebs—on a small
morocco case,

Raised the lid and saw a medal, on its upturned
side a date,

“1857” graven on the tarnished laurelled plate.

’Twas enough, and ere I turned it in its faded
velvet bed

Quite a host of recollections ran in riot through
my head ;

And from out the musty boxes, loved of spider
and of mouse,

Came a half-forgotten story of an owner of the
house.

Thus : A dusty roadway rises, and an Indian
sun beats down

Where an English scouting party gallop in from
Delhi Town.

THE MUTINY YEAR

On their flank the rebel rifles rattle out in sudden
storms,

One full mile in front is shelter, where a sweat-
ing battery forms.

On they come in open order, through the danger
zone they sweep,

Save the last, whose wounded Waler pecks,
and pitches in a heap,

Struggles, shivers and lies quiet, while the
trooper makes a run,

Tries to join his comrades halting under cover
of the gun,

Where they breathe their sobbing horses, and the
boy who's in command

Knocks the dust from off his tunic, numbers off
his tattered band,

Throws a glance along the roadway where the
bullets flick and bound,

Sees the distant, limping figure, swings his
reeking Arab round,

THE MUTINY YEAR

Swears, and, sitting down to gallop, sends him
racing back again,
Gets the trooper up in safety, spite the raking
leaden rain,

And again defies the gauntlet of the glaring shot-
swept road,
Till the Arab rocks and staggers into cover with
his load !

.

This the story I remembered of those days by
Delhi's gate,
As I read the magic figures of the medal's
famous date.

Then it seemed to my romantic and unmilitary
mind,
That some record of his riding might be found
engraved behind.

So I turned it, and discovered that, some fifty
years ago,
His Aunt Jane had scored with butter at the
local county show.

SWEEP

AULD Sweep, your muzzle's grey
As the rime at skreigh o' day,
Ye're no fit to tak the brae,
 Neeps, nor ploo—
You that wis sae gleg an' bauld,
I' the het an' i' the cauld,—
Ay, ye're wearin' gey an' auld,
 Sweep, the noo !

Ye'd come, I ken it fine,
Limpin' far ahint the line,
Sittin' doon at dykes, to whine
 Sair perplexed ;
Hirplin' on aye, stiff an' lame,
Till the Laird wad pit ye hame,
Wi' the cairt that taks the game,
 Maybe vexed !

Ye're deaf an' slaw an' blin',
An' ye're by wi' muir and whin,

SWEEP

Pickin' up or drivin' in,
 Braw an' douce ;
An' ye're a' rheumatic pains,
Gin the wet gets to your banes,
Sae ye'll need to bide your lanes
 Ben the hoose !

The young dog's fleet an' spang,
An' he'll rin the hale day lang,
Yet it's sweir am I to gang
 Wantin' you,
For traivel East or West,
Aye the auldest freends is best,
An' ye're aulder than the rest,
 Sweep, the noo !

PATSY

PUPPY dog, rough as a bramble,
 Eyed like a saint,
Beggar to slobber and gambol,
 Corky and quaint,
Chasing your tail like a fussy turbillion,
Plaguing a playmate with fuss of a million
 Gnats,
But keen as a kestrel
 And fierce as a stoat is,
A-thrill to ancestral
 Furies at notice
 Of rats,
Rats, little hound of Beelzebub, rats !

And as you sleep off a surfeit,
 Mischief and tea,
Prone on the summer-warm turf, it
 Surely must be
(Rapturous whimper and tremulant twitching),
Somewhere or other there's hunting bewitching ;

PATSY

That's

More blesséd than biscuit ;

I'll lay, through your slumbers,
They squeak and they frisk it

In shadowy numbers,

R-r-rats,

Rats, little hound of Beelzebub, rats !

SOLOMON AND THE MONKEYS

APES and peacocks and almug and ivory
Solomon sent for over seas,
And, if you ask me the reason why for he
Sent his shipping for such as these—
Peacocks flaunt like an opal necklace,
Figurey almug's fair and fleckless,
Ivory's smooth and white and speckless
(Tusks on a plinth of gold) ;
And the little grey monkeys, so wrinkled wise,
Little grey apes with the twinkling eyes,
Puckered, brown and cold,
'Spite of their lightsome ways and reckless,
Know the wisdom of gods of old !

Solomon sat by his garden palaces
Seeking wisdom of earth and air ;
Little grey apes, full of mocks and malices,
Chipped and chattered around his chair ;
Chipped and chattered and made grimaces,

SOLOMON AND THE MONKEYS

Rubbed their backs and their wrinkled faces,
Swung themselves with a score of graces
Through the cedar trees :
But never their knowledge could Solomon
catch,
For, if he asked them, they'd only scratch,
Stop and scratch for fleas ;
Then they'd rocket away in races,
Ruffling, scuffling, in twos and threes !

So Solomon sent for Hiram, King o' Tyre—
Hiram strode 'neath the budding leaf,
Purple vesture and golden ring, attire
Fit indeed for a merchant chief—
He bade him watch the monkeys slipping
Through the pomegranate branches dipping
Over the fountains ferned and dripping,
Green and clear and cold ;
And "'Tis excellent knowledge," King Hiram
said,
"That keeps its learning inside its head ;
That's your monkey's gold—
That's the reason that sets them skipping—
That's their wisdom of gods of old !

TO A BISON

[After reading a recent article on his preservation.]

CREATURE, regards ! What though river and
prairie

Know not to-day the stampede of your horde,
See not the maelstrom of heads huge and hairy,
Hear not the thunder of hoof upon sward ?
What though the plough breaks the trails where
your following

Millions once surged like the flow of the tide,
And o'er your picturesque places of wallowing
Golden as sunrise the wheat stretches wide ?

For there's romance in your veriest mention ;
Camp-fires at nightfall and mountings at morn,
Wigwam and war-path again claim attention,
Hair-breadth escapes from your perilous horn !
Yes, when we read of you, boyhood comes back
again,
(Shade of Mayne Reid and of Ballantyne too !)

TO A BISON

And we're repelling a Red-skin attack again,
Strewing the lawn with belligerent Sioux !

Or, on our mustangs (the fire-breathing devils)
Madly we gallop with never a pull,
Close with your mob on the alkali levels
(Sometimes the garden), and drop the big bull !
Back to the waggons (the tool-shed or rockery),
Loose in the saddle to breakfast we ride,
Naught of contemptible cruet and crockery
Needs the proved plainsman when pemmican's
fried !

Will you once more at Saskatchewan's regions
Thrive, as we hope, just as hardy and tough
As when the red man of old saw your legions
Blacken the plains from some prominent bluff ?
Will the bronzed cow-puncher hear, when the
twittering
Quail greet the morning, your truculent moo
Boom down the cañon where snow-peaks are
glittering,
Soaring aloft to the fathomless blue ?

TO A BISON

Only your Totem can tell ; so at present

Just let us wish you the peace of the hills,
Salt-lick and wallow, and pasturage pleasant,

Safe from the bullets of "Buffalo Bills";

Few, half domestic—the blood's not degenerate—

Long may you rule your park-ranges at ease,
And here's regards to you, creature, at any
rate,

Since your mere mention brings dreams such
as these !

TO A BANK OF ENGLAND PIGEON

DESCENDANT of the doves of Aphrodite
Who fluttered in that type of beauty's train
And followed her affairs—the grave, the flighty,
Cooing in just your calm, uncaring strain,
Whether she thought to rid her of a rival,
Or bring some laggard lover to her knees ;—
I see you, Sir, the latter-day survival
Of such fair pluméd satellites as these !

“Bred in the bone,” perchance you know the
motto !

And so you doubtless dream of tides that lace
O'er snow-white sand by some blue Paphian
grotto,

Or of your sires' dark, murmurous, woodland
Thrace ;

A penny whistle shrilling 'mid the traffic
May seem the goat-foot god's own oaten trill,

TO A BANK OF ENGLAND PIGEON

Till you shall think to hear the Mænads maffic
In the upborne commotion of Cornhill !

And from your perch where sooty winds are
striving,

O Bank stock-dove, as o'er Hymettian bloom
You yet may watch the busy bees a-hiving
The sweet and subtle fragrance of the Boom,
And see, as once before the Cyprian matron,
The crowds that wait, obsequious and discreet,
On her, your passionless and newer patron,
The stern Old Lady of Threadneedle Street !

DAPHNE

HERE'S a tale from times called olden, further
qualified as golden,
When the gods on high Olympus smacked of
earth and sunburnt tan,
With their far from formal Dryads, and their
Oreads and Naiads,
And the questionable doings of the forest Courts
of Pan.

At the era that I write on, in the whole of
Greece no chiton
Hid a contour more alluring or revealed so fair
a cheek
As the one which draped the figure, in its folded
classic rigour,
Of a charming girl called Daphne, of a type
divinely Greek.

I perhaps may also mention that her eyes were
bluest gentian,
While her hair was like the sunshine on the
rippling waves of wheat,

DAPHNE

And her face supplied a thesis for the shepherds'
pastoral pieces,
And they laid their choicest garlands at her little
sandalled feet.

But, in spite of rustic sheep's eyes and bucolic
winks and deep sighs,
Daphne shunned alike the pastorals and posies
of the herds
For the lonely woodland places or for high and
windy spaces,
For the music of the mountains or the singing of
the birds.

And if Bacchus and his leopards roused the
neighbouring nymphs and shepherds,
When the Bassarid and Mænad made the Vale
of Tempe ring
With their light and larky revels on the misty
moonlit levels,
Well, I rather fancy Daphne would avoid that
kind of thing.

DAPHNE

So the empty weeks that passed her left her cold
as alabaster,
Till one dark day by Peneus where the laurel
thickets are,
With a certain shy ignition, Daphne met a tall
musician
Who in fact was young Apollo who had loved
her from afar.

Now, although his reputation gave some cause
for conversation,
Still I think that had she waited he'd have won
her at his ease,
But, when he declared his title, in alarm at his
recital
She forsook his further wooing for the butterflies
and bees.

Like the summer wind that passes, Daphne fled
o'er flowers and grasses,
For she heard the rushing footsteps race across
the scented thyme,

DAPHNE

And in sudden panic ardour, she implored the
 gods to guard her
From the words she vowed were nonsense and
 the kiss she called a crime !

And at once her lithe form faltered and grew
 rigid, and she altered
To a bush of gleaming laurel in its dark peren-
 nial green ;
And she grows beside the river where the rushes
 thrill and shiver
With an everlasting murmur of the things which
 might have been !

And when autumn days are dying and the wood
 is full of sighing,
When there's sobbing in the pine tops and a
 murmur in the firs,
Do we tax imagination if we say its lamentation
Is our little Daphne crying for the love that was
 not hers ?

.
Should we want to pin a moral to this legend of
 the laurel
For the use of any *débutante* on reaching seventeen,

DAPHNE

It is : Don't be too unbending, or you'll run
the risk of ending
Not a laurel, but a wall-flower—which is not an
evergreen !

PROMETHEA

BEFORE the February day
 Yellow the window-pane once more,
I hear her on her slipshod way
 Clatter outside my bedroom door,
Unshrined and all unknown to fame—
To me a goddess just the same !

Hers was no columned Grecian grove,
 Hers no be-ferned Sicilian fount ;
No shepherd of the white-fleeced drove
 Adjudged her fair on Ida's mount,—
Nor did she in the dark unbar
The dawn gate for the sun-god's car !

Yet, ere the laggard milkman cries,
 Ill-nurtured nymph of household care
She comes, poor child, with heavy eyes
 Adown the creaky lodging stair,
To struggle with the Stygian gloom
Of fog that fills the dining-room !

PROMETHEA

Coarse-fingered, grimy as to face
From scuttle, pan, or window-sill ;
Well, was the very rosiest Grace
So fit to merit man's good-will
As she, who comes in low estate,
Poor little drudge, to lay the grate ?

And when the glow of kindly flame
Leaps 'neath her touch to warm and cheer
The cockles of the human frame,
Its little handmaid doth appear,
For sheer humanitarian worth,
His equal, who brought Fire to Earth !

A CLASSICAL CONTRAST

I HAVE (in bronze) a tiny
 Adventuress of Greece,
A little laughing Phryne,
 Upon my mantelpiece,
And when I see her smiling
 Imagination strays
Once more in brave, beguiling,
 Divine Athenian days !

Cool marble courts are ringing
 As merry voices call,
Where girls are garland-stringing
 For Springtime's festival ;
In lanes of linkéd lightness
 The roses rope, and flow
Blood-red upon the whiteness
 Of chiselled Parian snow !

I have a pot of pewter,
 And when the firelight gleams

A CLASSICAL CONTRAST

It too will turn transmuter
Of commonplace to dreams.
Then, though the year's at ember
Once more high June doth reign
And I in dreams remember,—
And win the thing again !

On turf of headland thymy,
Where brine-washed breezes strive,
I lay the subtle stymie,
I drive the spanking drive ;
I see the grey tides sleeping,
I watch the grey gulls wheel,
Till through the dusk come creeping
The lights of distant Deal !

O pewter and O Phryne,
Since both of you may bring
Your visions blue and briny
Or garlanded of Spring :
I welcome you together
Upon my mantelpiece,
And love both magics, whether
Of England or of Greece !

A SONG OF SYRINX

LITTLE lady, whom 'tis said
Pan tried very hard to please,
I expect before you fled
'Neath the wondering willow-trees,
Ran away from his caress
In the Doric wilderness,
That you'd led him on a lot,
Said you would, and then would not :
No way that to treat a man,
Little lady loved of Pan !

I expect you'd dropped your eyes
(Eyes that held your stream's own hue,
Kingfishers and dragon-flies
Sparkling in their ripple blue),
And you'd tossed your tresses up,
Yellow as the cool king-cup,
And you'd dimpled at his vows
Underneath the willow boughs,
Ere you mocked him, ere you ran,
Little lady loved of Pan !

A SONG OF SYRINX

So they've turned you to a reed,
As the great Olympians could,
You've to bow, so they've decreed,
When old Pan comes through the wood,
You've to curtsey and to gleam
In the wind and in the stream
(Which are forms, I've heard folks say,
That the god adopts to-day),
And we watch you bear your ban,
Little lady loved of Pan !

For in pleasant spots you lie
Where the lazy river is,
Where the chasing whispers fly
Through the beds of bulrushes,
Where the big chub, golden dun,
Turns his sides to catch the sun,
Where one listens for the queer
Voices in the splashing weir,
Where I know that still you can
Weave a spell to charm a man,
Little lady loved of Pan !

AN URBAN ECLOGUE

(Coronation Year)

STREPHON :

How favoured are we, Phyllis,
That ours is not the age
When rustic Amaryllis
Enjoyed a rustic rage ;
Her freckles and her frolics,
Her stupid swains we know—
I've read their old bucolics
(I had to years ago !).

PHYLLIS :

I haven't (thanks to heaven,
And Fraülein's easy yoke) ;
But still I fancy, Strephon,
I know your tiresome folk :
Their compliments—becowslipped,
Their idylls—of the sheep,
Their wreaths—that o'er the brows slipped
In unbecoming sleep !

AN URBAN ECLOGUE

STREPHON :

I picture you reclining
With cricked and aching spine,
To catch the pan-pipes whining
Beneath some draughty pine ;
You, Phyllis, with your brooches
And Paris frocks to-day
Supreme among the coaches,
Resplendent at the play !

PHYLLIS :

I simply can't imagine
You on the classic lawns,
With no Enclosure badge on,
Amid the festive fauns :
Or lounging, say, astride of
A log on summer nights,
You, Strephon, you the pride of
The window-seat at White's !

STREPHON :

They knew not bands and cities,
Nor streets in bunting bound ;

AN URBAN ECLOGUE

Their bunting chirped his ditties
When Pan came barging round ;
For in their futile, far land,
The only crownings were
When someone dumped a garland
On someone else's hair !

PHYLLIS :

Yet sometimes, when the dawning
Comes o'er the chimneys tall,
I find I'm almost yawning
Half through some ripping ball ;
It's odd, but all one knows is
Just then that such things please
As hedges and wild-roses
And buttercups and bees !

STREPHON :

Why not then ? *I'll* have fancies ;
I, too, would botanize
And pick—I think they're pansies—
The blue things like your eyes :

AN URBAN ECLOGUE

Or down the Henley reaches
The crank canoe impel,
To lunch 'neath Shiplake beeches—
If you were there as well !

PHYLLIS :

This much then for conclusion,
I'd say small difference is
'Twixt tommy-rot effusion
And old absurdities—
The sort your shepherd-sillies
Fired off in fatuous flow
For rustic Amaryllis,
A million years ago !

THE SCARAB

SPOIL of the tomb of kings,
 Snatched from the shadows solemn,
Where the wide falcon-wings
 Brood o'er the pylon's column,
Scarab (oh, blue of the artist Egyptian),
How goes your curious carven inscription?
 Emblem of Life and Sun,
 How do its letters run?
Spells it of magic and censers a-swing
Ere you were vowed to my Lilian's ring?

Tells it of girlish throng,
 Homage and graceful pose, if
Pharaoh should chance along,
 Pharaoh who knew not Joseph?
Down the dim coolness of corridors going,
Out to the noon on his rose gardens glowing;
 Where by the fish-pond's brink
 Ibises coral-pink
Stood in a sacred and somnolent row,
Ages and ages and ages ago?

THE SCARAB

Spoil of the pyramid

Where the old shadows linger,

Now as a mascot slid

On to a dainty finger ;

If I might fathom the secret you fetter,

Hazard each cryptical, long-ago letter,

Emblem of Life that's gone,

I would say, "Love lives on" :

Surely a proper and plausible thing,

Since you are vowed to my Lilian's ring !

AWA' FRAE GOWRIE

(Lowland Love-Song)

SHE wis never that young, she wis never just
that bonny,

An' it's nae the bawbees, for she's no had ony

This seventeen year,

Yet it's oh but I 'm sweir

Tae pairt frae ma jo Annie Powrie ;

She's fair past wurk,—though she's but
fifty-three,

An' they've taen her till the infirmarie,

An' wha's tae rax me ma dish o' tea,

When she's awa' frae Gowrie ?

I've pawned her puckle gear, an' I've drinkt
her bit beddin',

An' the auld black gown that she wore tae wir
weddin',

An' her stuffit chair,

Still it's eh but I'm sair

Tae twine frae ma jo Annie Powrie ;

AWA' FRAE GOWRIE

The doctor says that she's gey far through,
But wha's tae dig the croft i' the noo,
An' wha's tae bed me the nichts I'm fou,
When she's awa' frae Gowrie ?

She was wattit tae the bane at the tattie-sawin'
I' the spring o' the year when the win' wis
blawin'

O' a cauld-rife airt,
An' it's wae is ma hairt

Tae twine frae ma jo Annie Powrie ;
They're tellin' aye that she's like tae dee,
Nae an unco' thing as ye'll agree,
But wha's tae fend for the pig an' me,
Gin she's awa' frae Gowrie ?

A JEWELLED SELL

PALE pearls
Are best for girls,
And queenly diamond stones
Their charming chaperons
Do most befit ;
But this fierce ruby, heart's blood of the East,
What does it want, I ask you, west of Suez ?
Down the dim centuries of fight and feast
It's blazed (no doubt) on many a Rajah-roué's
Kingly and costly kit ;
Balefully still it blinks of hate and harm,
An asp upon my Amy's rose-white arm !

What tales
Of long jezails,
And grim zenana-bars,
And cruel scimitars
Could it portray !
Torture, intrigue it knows, and cut-and-thrust
Of companies, bow-string and poisoned potion,

A JEWELLED SELL

And elephants soft-padding through the dust,
And years and years of killing and commotion.

What, Amy, did you say ?

“Talk about something that I understand”?

Why, quite.

A Capetown garnet, is it ? Oh, all right !

BLUE ROSES

SHEPHERD in delicate Dresden china,
Loitering ever the while you twine a
 Garland of oddly azure roses,
All for a shepherdess passing fair ;
Poor little shepherdess waiting there
 All the time for your china posies,
Posies pale for her jet-black hair !

Doesn't she wait (oh, the anxious glances !)
Flowers for one of your stately dances,
 A crown to finish a dainty toilette,
(Haven't the harps just now begun,
Minuets 'neath a china sun ?)

Doesn't she dread that the dust may soil it,
When, oh, *when* will the boy be done ?

Summer and winter and still you linger,
Laggard lover with lazy finger,
 Never your little maid's wreath completing,

BLUE ROSES

Still half-strung are its petalled showers :
Must she wait all her dancing hours,
 Wait in spite of her shy entreating,
Wait for ever her azure flowers ?

THE ROAD

“Now where are ye goin’,” ses I, “wid the
shawl

An’ cotton umbrella an’ basket an’ all ?

Would ye not wait for McMullen’s machine,
Wid that iligant instep befittin’ a queen ?

Oh, you wid the wind-soft grey eye wid
a wile in it,

You wid the lip wid the troublesome smile
in it,

Sure, the road’s wet, ivery rain-muddied
mile in it — ”

“ *Ah, the Saints’ll be kapin’ me petticoats clean !* ”

“ But,” ses I, “ would ye like it to meet Clancy’s
bull,

Or the tinks poachin’ rabbits above Slieve-na-
coul ?

An’ the ford at Kilmaddy is big wid the snows,
An’ the whisht Little People that wear the
green close,

THE ROAD

They'd run from the bog to be makin' a
catch o' ye,

The king o' them's wishful o' weddin' the
match o' ye,

'Twould be long, if they did, ere ye lifted
the latch o' ye——"

"What fairy's to touch her that sings as she goes!"

"Ah, where are ye goin'," ses I, "wid the
shawl,

An' the grey eyes a-dreamin' beneath it an' all?

The road by the mountain's a long one, depend

Ye'll be done for, alannah, ere reachin' the end;

Ye'll be bate wid the wind on each back-
breakin' bit on it,

Wet wid the puddles and lamed wid the
grit on it,—

Since lonesome ye're layin' yer delicut fit
on it——"

*"Sure whin's a road lonesome that's stepped wid a
friend"?*

That's stepped wid a friend?

Who did Bridgy intend?

Still 'twas me that went wid her right on to the
end!

THE ARTISTS

BLUE as a mile of pansies are the seas that circle
the shores,
Circle the shores of Fairyland and the high,
enchanted ways
Where the great grim sea-green dragons guard
the jade and the amber doors,
And the Queen of the Fairies' peacocks walk
under the crimson mays ;
Oh, what, I wonder,
Could look more gay
Than a peacock under
A crimson may ?

For that is the home of colour and many a
wizard hue,
'Tis there they deck the rainbow ere he's pinned
against the rain,
And squeeze the tubes for the pictures of
"things too good to be true,"
And make the gilt for the turrets of castles we
build in Spain ;

THE ARTISTS

And what's more gilded,
This world amid,
Than castles buildd
Near old Madrid?

For we, we're all of us artists with plans and
canvases
Of excellent Spanish castles with turrets all
about,
With angels in the corners, romaunts, and
symphonies
Of things as we would have them did every
dream work out ;
And such were duller,
You'll understand,
If robbed of colour
From Fairyland !

So we must stroke the dragons and tickle their
shiny scales,
And they shall grin politely and we shall pass
along,

THE ARTISTS

Where under the crimson may-trees the peacocks spread their tails,
To dip our brushes in magic and echoes of fairy song ;
And find us Fancy
Our daubs to deck,
With tints of pansy
And peacock's neck !

GOLD !

[“ It is announced from Vancouver that the rumours of a big strike of gold at Bitter Creek have been confirmed.”—*Daily Paper.*]

GOLD ! 'mid the North's magnetic hush,
They've struck it in the good old manner,
Not the beringed promoter's gush,
No swank of your prospectus-planner,
But the true kind that played its part
With bowies, “guns,” and forty-niners,
When (by the magic of Bret Harte)
You found no life excelled the miner's !

How often have you, beat but game,
Your old red shirt without a collar,
Toiled at the stiff, abandoned claim
You'd purchased with your last half dollar ;
Sure-armed, you swung your pick aloft
Through days of doubt and hours of danger,
Then, lo ! the vein—dull, yellowy, soft,
And — “Sort o' think you'd struck it,
Stranger !”

GOLD !

And up the pass, through pine and snow,
 You've heard the river in the cañon
Shouting a thousand foot below,
 The timber-wolf your sole companion ;
With aching back you've faced the hill,
 You've searched each likely ledge and dug it,
And whooped the eagle from his kill
 When you acclaimed a ten-ounce nugget !

You've swaggered into camp at night,
 Bronzed, bold, a devil of a fellow ;
You've seen the windy dark alight,
 Stern faces round the fire grown mellow ;
And, where the fanged Sierras rise
 Up to the moon's cold flooding crystal,
You've lain and watched the opal skies,
 Your head upon a loaded pistol !

Tap of the pick ! it's waked, in sooth,
 The kindly, half-forgotten fairies,
Friends of the camping fires of youth
 That shone on Indians, trails, and prairies ;

GOLD !

Whose sparks still through the darkness fall
In flashing showers of gold unstinted,
The purest metal of them all,
A finer ore than e'er was minted !

TO AN AZTEC IDOL

LITTLE idol of gold
With your legs interlaced,
And your fingers a-fold
On your horrible waist,
Say, of what do you dream as you sit there and
Brood with a simper unchaste ?

You're some six inches high,
Yet the devils that lurk
In the slant of your sly
And malevolent smirk,
Seem to hint at the evil of ages, left latent,
—But ready to work !

Do the days of your state
Come again as you drowse ?
Do the crowds at your gate
Offer incense and vows ?
Are your hand-maidens slim young Princesses,
with
Emeralds bound on their brows ?

TO AN AZTEC IDOL

Does the trend of your dream
To old rituals yearn ?
Does the victim's wild scream
And the sunshine return,
With the Priests, and the blood-dabbled altars, the
Uplifted casket and urn ?

Do you see in your sleep
Proud hidalgos of Spain,
And the galleons that leap
From the blue of the Main,
The sack of the temple, the treasure,
The plumes and the rapiers again ?

.

Dead, dead are the days
When you pranked it, and preened,
And—from altar-fire blaze
To my chimney demeaned—
You sit there a-simper o'er long ago
Lusts, little god,—little fiend !

RICHMOND PARK

Oh, have you been to Richmond of a windy
April morning,
When the loose white clouds are flying and the
blue is washed and clean,
When the beeches on the hill-top don a diffident
adorning
And the river twines its silver through the
shimmer of the green,
When the cuckoo flings his notes
And the thrushes crack their throats
And the boatmen at the eyot start a-varnishing
their boats ?

Have you seen its gallant vistas in the splendour
of a June day,
Oh, the rhododendron thickets and the water
and the wood !
When the stags are still in velvet and across the
hush of noon-day
Comes the throbbing of the motors past the Gate
of Robin Hood,

RICHMOND PARK

When the bracken by the ponds
First unfolds its crinkled fronds
And the dragon-flies are dancing round the
slender willow wands?

Have you been to royal Richmond when the
year is growing mellow,
And October, mild and fruitful, on its woodland
sets her mark,
When the footpath—of her bounty—has a carpet
red and yellow,
And the great harts roar a challenge as the twi-
light meets the dark,
And at half-past five or so
There are lights that flash and glow,
Thrilling upward in the quiet out of Kingston
down below?

Oh, have you been to Richmond when the days
are short and chilly,
When a red December sunset has been swallowed
in the fog,

RICHMOND PARK

When the wanderer, belated in the frosty air and
stilly,
Sees the tree-trunks full of goblins, and he whistles
up his dog,
And turns to look again
At the firelight on the pane,
In the keeper's cottage window, going home by
Clarence Lane ?

If you've not, then, and would know it, with its
pools and forest spaces,
Take this gratis introduction, very willingly
bestowed,
And a trifling thing in train-fares will acquaint
you with its graces,
Or you'll hear its Pan-pipe music by a 'bus from
Brompton Road.
If a Dryad you should see
And you care to mention me,
I shouldn't be astonished if she asked you in to
tea !

AS IN THE BEGINNING

IN the very far beginning, when our fathers
lived in caves,
And the glacier rolled and shuddered where to-
day you roll the lawn,
Then the forests and the rivers, and the
mountains and the waves
Were the haunts of troll and kelpie, gnome,
pishogue and leprechaun ;
Long ago—oh, long ago,
Little feet went to and fro
In the hushed and solemn moonrise, or the
silence of the dawn :
Weren't they just the prowling otter or the fox-
cub or the fawn ?

If the panting hunters plodded on the hairy
mammoth's trail,
Till the flint-tipped lances laid him in the
twilight stiff and stark,

AS IN THE BEGINNING

If the yelling tribesmen lingered at the stranding
of the whale
Till the sledges were benighted in the demon-
haunted dark,
Each untutored scalp would rise
At mysterious woodland cries,
And they'd glance across their shoulders with a
shudder and a "Hark !"
Though 'twas probably the screech owl or some
startled roebuck's bark !

If the neolithic lover in a neolithic June
Met at nightfall, 'neath the hawthorn bough, a
neolithic maid,
Then, despite the ministrations of a full and
friendly moon,
As it caught the clumps of blossom in a net of
light and shade,
They would hear with knocking knees,
Come a kind of grunting wheeze,
For they'd think some spook had spied them,
and their cheeks would match their jade ;
But they never saw the badger rooting truffles
in the glade !

AS IN THE BEGINNING

Go you out along the chalk downs, and you'll see
our fathers yet

(Cairn upon the thymy hill-top, tumulus of tribal
kings !)

Yes, and in the sun-warmed quarry find perhaps
an amulet,

Such as kept them from the kobold, or the beat
of goblin wings ;

Then your sympathy shall stray

To our sires of feeble clay,

With their little local godlings and their foolish
fairy rings,

Though you know—for Science says so—that
there never were such things !

For yourself—you've sometimes hurried when
the mayfly cease to rise,

With your rod inside its cover and your cast
around your hat,

When the beetles boom like bullets, and the
bats are hawking flies,

And the night is in the meadows, and the mists
are on the flat,

AS IN THE BEGINNING

Past some darkling belt of pine,
While you've felt all up your spine
Run a sort of icy shiver, and your heart's gone
pit-a-pat—
*Yet 'twas only just the night-jar, just the plopping
water-rat !*

MULL

TELL me not of Grecian isles
And a charm that's olden,
Brooding on the turquoise blue
That the Argo's oar-banks knew,
Where a sun-steeped ease beguiles,
Far away, and golden !

There's a Western isle I know,
Where the last land merges
In the grey and outer seas,
Southward from the Hebrides,
And through old sea-caverns go
Old Atlantic dirges !

Grey it is, and very still
In the August weather ;
Grey the basking seals that flock
On their jagged lift of rock ;
Starkly heaves a waste of hill
Grey, untouched of heather !

MULL

Grey streams show, by cliff and hag,
Pools, and runs that riot,
There the great grey sea-trout rise
Splashing silver at your flies,
There the grey crow from the crag
Croaks across the quiet !

That's the place where I would be,
Where the winds blow purely ;
For I hear, by Fancy blest,
All the Fairies of the West
Sound their silver pipes for me—
Horns of Elfland surely !

THE LITTLE GHOST

BROAD, high yew hedges flank the flowers, and
border

An old, smooth lawn where, fashioned grimly
stiff,

Two knights—in close-clipped box—keep
ancient order,

O'er shaven dragon, hound and hippogriff ;

And there,

When the June air

At dusk is cool and fair,

And the great roses strengthen on their stalks,

Down the long path, beset

With heaven-scented, haunting mignonette,

The gardeners say,

A little grey

Ghost-lady walks !

I haven't seen her, haven't heard her legend,

Pale little shade, only the rumour tells

THE LITTLE GHOST

That 'tis her wont to wander to the hedge-end,
And vanish near the Canterbury Bells ;

And so

I do not know

What sends her to and fro—

Murder, may be, or broken heart, or gold.

I like to fancy most

That she is just some little lady's ghost

Who loved her flowers

And quiet hours

In Junes of old !

COTTAGE GARDEN PRAYER

LITTLE garden gods,
You of good bestowing,
You of kindly showing
Mid the pottings and the pods,
Watchers of geranium beds,
Pinks and stocks and suchlike orders,
Rose, and sleepy poppy-heads—
Bless us in our borders,
Little garden gods !

Little garden gods,
Bless the time of sowing,
Watering and growing ;
Lastly, when our sunflower nods,
And our rambler's red array
Waits the honey-bee her labours,
Bless our garden that it may
Beat our next-door neighbour's,
Little garden gods !

BALLADE OF AUGUST

Now, when the street-pent airs blow stale
A longing stirs us as of yore
To take the old Odyssian trail,
To bend upon the trireme's oar
For isled stream and hill-bound shore ;
To lay aside the dirty pen
For summer's blue and golden store
'Neath other skies, 'mid stranger men !

Then let the rover's call prevail
That opes for us the enchanted door,
That bids us spread the silken sail
For bays o'er which the seabirds soar,
And foam-flecked rollers pitch and roar,
Where nymph maybe, and mermaiden,
Come beachward in the moon-rise hoar,
'Neath other skies, 'mid stranger men !

Blue-eyed Calypsos, Circes pale
(The sage who shuns them I abhor),

BALLADE OF AUGUST

These—for a fortnight—shall not fail
To thrill the heart's susceptible core,
To bind us with their ancient lore,
Who rather like to listen when
Sweet-lipped the sirens voice their score,
'Neath other skies, 'mid stranger men !

ENVOY

Masters, who seek the minted ore,
It's only August now and then,
Ah, take the Wanderer's way once more,
'Neath other skies, 'mid stranger men !

BALLADE OF THE FOREST IN SUMMER

FRA Cruachan tae Aberdeen

The hinds'll move their calves soon
Up frae the bracken's bonnie green
To yon blue heights that float aboon ;
Nae snaws the tops an' corries croon ;
Cragg whaur the eagle lifts his kills
Blink i' the gowden efternoon ;
It's summer noo in a' the hills !

The heather sleeps frae morn till e'en
Braw in her reed-an'-purple goon ;
Sax weeks it wants or stags be clean
An' gang wi thickenin' manes an' broun
Waitin' the cauld October moon
When a' the roarin' brae-face fills—
Ye've heard yon wild, wanchancy tune?
It's summer noo in a' the hills !

Yet blaws a soupin' breeze an' keen ;
We're wearit for it whiles in toun,

BALLADE OF FOREST IN SUMMER

An' I wad be whaur I hae been
In Autumn's blast or heats o' June
Up on the quiet forest groun',
Friens wi' the sun, or shoor that chills,
Watchin' the beasts gang up an' doon ;
It's summer noo in a' the hills !

ENVOY

Mountains o' deer, ye ca' a loon
Fra streets an' sic-like stoury ills
Wi' thankfu' heart an' easy shoon ;
It's summer noo in a' the hills !

BALLADE OF FANCY FAIR

IN April hours
 Its booths we knew
Uplift 'mid flowers
 Untouched of rue.
'Twas then we drew
 The magic ware
From tents of blue
 At Fancy Fair !

Its kindly bowers
 For lovers due,
From chilly showers
 They kept us two ;
Lest wetted through,
 We'd ceased to care
For Cupid's brew
 And Fancy Fair !

Still hath it dower
 When life's askew,

BALLADE OF FANCY FAIR

A gentle power,
A kind ado,
For me and you
Who still may share
The rainbow view
Of Fancy Fair !

ENVOY

Princess, anew
We'll wander there,
For dreams are true
In Fancy Fair !

THE EVENING RISE

LITTEN with lots and lots of little moons,
Broods o'er the bosky bank the guelder-rose ;
She watches by the river as it goes,
Knowing its whispered secrets and its runes,
And that it's useless in these afternoons
Of midsummer ; I hardly do suppose
A trout had stirred just then for all our throws
And feathered lures begirt of silk cocoons.

But now hath come the coolth and kindliness
Of eve, and we may get to work again ;
See, there's a bulge, and there a fish came up,
And we anon shall levy toll and cess—
A brace mayhap ; and still before the train
Have time for supper and a cider-cup !

TO A MACAW

FOWL of the nightmare visage, baldly white,
Your evil orb fulfilled of all the sly
Inherent devilries of days gone by,
Ere from the main upswept the Spaniards' might,
When your familiar sires would shriek delight,
Perched where some cruel temple rose on high—
I will not scratch that heathen head, not I,
Moreover, I am certain that you bite !

I wonder haply, long, long years ago
If once you lived, a painted Aztec priest,
Ill-famed for many a fierce and hurtful deed,
Who in your guise must watch the seasons flow,
A captive, far from sacrificial feast,
Cloyed with the unconvincing nut and seed !

TO A TERRIER

(November, 1910)

CRIB, on your grave beneath the chestnut
boughs

To-day no fragrance falls nor summer air,
Only a master's love who laid you there
Perchance may warm the earth 'neath which
you drowse

In dreams from which no dinner gong may
rouse,

Unwakeable, though close the rat may dare,
Deaf, though the rabbit thump in playful scare,
Silent, though twenty tabbies pay their vows.

And yet, mayhap, some night when shadows
pass,

And from the fir the brown owl hoots on high,
That should one whistle 'neath a favouring star
Your small white shade shall patter o'er the
grass,

Questing for him you loved o' days gone by,
Ere Death the Dog-Thief carried you afar !

TO A DÉBUTANTE

You trip, O Youth incarnate, down the stairs,
Dear Miss Nineteen, whose dance-fresh grace
defies

Blossom of orchards, April's very skies ;
So might a nymph have slid to shepherd airs
In groves of cypress where the ringdove pairs,
Lightfoot, elusive, panting, woodland-wise,
With just a half-shy challenge in the eyes,
To fan pursuit or wake the love that dares.

Still I, your mid-aged friend, do most acclaim
Not the curved lip, the sun-steeped eyes of you,
Nor two slim feet, the bard-sung "little mice,"
But that dear gift, the clean, untarnished flame
That sends you, 'twixt the midnight chimes and
two,

With cheery gusto into supper thrice !

HORNS OF ELFLAND

A DREAM

AND at night we'd find a town,
Flat-roofed, by a star-strewn sea,
Where the pirate crew came down
To a long-forgotten quay,
And we'd meet them in the gloaming,
Tarry pigtails, back from roaming,
With a pot of pirate ginger for the likes of her
and me !

She was small and rather pale,
Grey-eyed, grey as smoke that weaves,
And we'd watch them stowing sail,
Forty most attractive thieves ;
Propped against the porphyry column,
She was seven, sweet and solemn,
And she'd hair blue-black as swallows when
they flit beneath the eaves.

On the moonlit sands and bare,
Clamorous, jewelled in the dusk,

A DREAM

There would be an Eastern Fair,
We could smell the mules and musk,
We could see the cressets flaring,
And we'd run to buy a fairing
Where a black man blew a fanfare on a carven
ivory tusk.

And we'd stop before the stall
Of a grave green-turbaned khan,
Gem or flower—he kept them all—
Persian cat or yataghan ;
And I'd pay a golden guinea
And she'd fill her holland pinny
With white kittens and red roses and blue stones
from Turkestan !

.
London streets have flowers anew,
London shops with gems are set ;
When you've none to give them to,
What is pearl or violet ?
Vain things both and emptinesses,
So they wait a dream-Princess's
Coming, if she's sweet and solemn with grey
eyes and hair of jet !

GHOSTS OF PAPER

SHOULD you go down Ludgate Hill,
As I'm sure you sometimes will,
When the dark comes soft and new,
Smudged and smooth and powder-blue,
And the lights on either hand,
Run away to reach the Strand ;
And the winter rains that stream
Make the pavements glance and gleam ;
There you'll see the wet roofs rise
Packed against the lamp-lit skies,
And at once you shall look down
Into an enchanted town.
Jewelled Fleet Street, golden gay,
Sloughs the drab of work-a-day,
Conjuring before you then
All her ghosts of ink and pen,
Striking from her magic mint
Places you have loved in print,
From the fairy towns and streets
Raised by Djinn and fierce Afreets,

GHOSTS OF PAPER

To the columned brass that shone
On the gates of Babylon.
You shall wander, mazed, amid
Pylon, palm, and pyramid ;
You shall see, where taxis throng,
River lamps of old Hong Kong ;
See the ramparts standing tall
Of the wondrous Tartar Wall ;
See, despite of rain and wind,
Marble towns of rosy Ind,
And the domes and palaces
Crowning Tripoli and Fez.
While, where buses churn and splash,
There's the ripple of a sash,
Silken maid and paper fan
And the peach-bloom of Japan.
But, the finest thing of all,
You shall ride a charger tall
Into huddled towns that haunt
Picture-books of old romaunt,
Where go squire and knight and saint,
Heavy limned in golden paint ;
You shall ride above the crowd
On a courser pacing proud,
In fit panoply and meet

GHOSTS OF PAPER

Through be-cobbled square and street,
Where with bays and gestures bland
Little brown-faced angels stand !

.
These are some of things you'll view
When the night is blurred and blue,
If you look down Ludgate Hill,
As I'm sure you often will !

TO A CHALK-BLUE

BUTTERFLIES, Butterflies, delicate downy ones,
Golden, and purple, and yellowy brown ones,
Whites, reds, and tortoiseshells, what's in a
hue ?

You're worth the whole lot of them, little
Chalk-Blue !

Fabled Apollos, of bug-hunter's hollow tales,
Camberwell Beauties, Large Coppers, and
Swallow-tails,
They've fled from high farming, they've gone
down the breeze,
To Elfland perhaps, or wherever you please !

You, Master Blue, hold by man and his handi-
works,
Chalk-pits and cuttings, and engineer's sandy
works,
Sway on his wheat stalks, most buoyant and
bold,
A turquoise a-droop on a chain of light gold !

TO A CHALK-BLUE

Here was your home, ere the Legion's lean
warriors

Laughed at the slings of Druidical quarriers,
Or ever the Eagles came swooping ashore,
You flew your blue ensign from Lizard to Nore !

Long may you linger and flourish exceedingly,
Dancing the sun round all summer unheedingly,
Sprite of his splendour, small priest of high
noon,

Oh, bold little, old little, blue bit of June !

PUK-WUDJIES

[“The Puk-Wudjies . . . the little People.”—*Longfellow*.]

THEY live 'neath the curtain
Of fir woods and heather,
And never take hurt in
The wildest of weather,
But best they love Autumn—she's brown as
themselves—
And they are the brownest of all the brown
elves ;
When loud sings the West Wind,
The bravest and best wind,
And puddles are shining in all the cart ruts,
They turn up the dead leaves,
The russet and red leaves,
Where squirrels have taught them to look out
for nuts !

The hedge-cutters hear them
Where berries are glowing,
The scythe circles near them
At time of the mowing,

PUK-WUDJIES

But most they love woodlands when Autumn's
winds pipe,
And all through the cover the beechnuts are ripe,
And great spikey chestnuts,
The biggest and best nuts,
Blown down in the ditches, fair windfalls lie
cast,
And no tree begrudges
The little Puk-Wudjies
A pocket of acorns, a handful of mast !

So should you be roaming
Where branches are sighing,
When up in the gloaming
The moon-wrack is flying,
And hear through the darkness, again and again,
What's neither the wind nor the spatter of
rain—
A flutter, a flurry,
A scuffle, a scurry,
A bump like the rabbits' that bump on the ground,
A patter, a bustle
Of small things that rustle,
You'll know the Puk-Wudjies are somewhere
around !

THE DISAPPOINTED DEMON

A JAPANESE artist of old took a chisel,
And a chunk of smooth ivory, soft as is such,
And, wrinkle by wrinkle and bristle by bristle,
A little old demon had life at his touch,—
 A squat little figure
 All sword-belts and vigour,
With claws that could clasp with a terrible
 clutch !

A tea-house acquired him, he sat in its porches
For years of red lacquer and joss-stick and fan,
The sun on the fir-trees at noon, and the torches
Of gay paper lanterns at nightfall, he'd scan,
 Blind to both for a geisha,
 The brightest in Asia,
Whom he loved, as a demon in ivory can !

She was small and delightful, her silk robes
 would rustle
When she slid o'er the matting with tea-tray
 and pot,

THE DISAPPOINTED DEMON

She'd a flower in her hair and a sash like a bustle,
And she loved her old demon, he fancied, a lot;
 For she laughed at him often,
 He'd thrill then and soften ;
She was called something San, though I never
 learnt what.

But alas for his fancies, he'd misunderstood her ;
One day, when the peach-bloom was pink on
 the trees,
There came a Mikado's Court Captain who
 wooed her
And wed her and carried her off at his ease,
 And a P. & O. seaman
 He looted the demon,
And brought him to London across the high seas !

.

Now he sits on my chimney in all his regalia,
As bored as a Buddha. He dreams of Japan,
Of hill-sides of cherry and banks of azalea
And pines that would whisper to maiden and man,
 But mostly of laughter
 That rang to the rafter,
The laughter of blossom-cheeked somebody San !

“TREASURE ISLAND”

A LOVER breeze to the roses pleaded,
Failed and faltered, took heart and advanced ;
Up over the peaches, unimpeded,
A great Red Admiral ducked and danced ;
But the boy with the book saw not, nor heeded,
Reading entranced—entranced !

He read, nor knew that the fat bees bumbled ;
He woke no whit to the tea-bell's touch,
The brown pigeons that wheeled and tumbled,
(For how should a pirate reck of such ?).
He read, and the flaming flower-beds crumbled,
At tap of the sea-cook's crutch !

And lo, there leapt for him dolphins running
The peacock seas of the buccaneer,
Long, savage reefs where the seals lay sunning,
The curve of canvas, the creak of gear ;
For ever the Master's wondrous cunning
Lent him of wizard lear !

* * * * *

“TREASURE ISLAND”

But lost are the garden days of leisure,
Lost with their wide-eyed ten-year-old,
Yet if you'd move to a bygone measure,
Or shape your heart to an ancient mould,
Maroons and schooners and buried treasure
Wrought on a page of gold—

Then take the book in the dingy binding
Still the shadows come, bearded, great,
And swaggering files of sea-thieves winding
Back, with their ruffling cut-throat gait,
Reclaim an hour when we first went finding
Pieces of Eight—of Eight.

THE GREAT ADVENTURE

WE saw the arc of the rainbow stand up o'er
the garden wall,

We scaled that perilous rampart to spy where
its foot might be,

We saw its trailing triumph, we marked its
flashing fall,

Over the hay-field, down by the river, under
the pollard-tree ;

We saw the fall of the rainbow,

We guessed where the gold would be,

Under the pollard, pollard, pollard,

Under the pollard-tree !

We slipped through the garden wicket, we
sped through the hay-cocks proud,

Where, gemmed in the slanting sunset, each
winking raindrop shone,

But we saw ere we gained the river, afloat on a
purple cloud,

The magical arch of fairy glory over the valley
gone !

THE GREAT ADVENTURE

We saw the arc of the rainbow
As the slant of the sunset shone,
Over the valley, valley, valley,
Over the valley gone !

Then up and spake our captain, " A fig for such
fairy gold,
Come follow me back, my hearties, to the things
of every day ;
For, touch but a magic treasure, 'twill crumble
to ashes cold,
So follow me back through the darkling hay-
cocks, back to the things that pay !"
We turned from the truant rainbow,
And went in the fading day,
Back through the hay-cocks, hay-cocks, hay-
cocks,
Back to the things that pay !

IF I HAD A BROOMSTICK

IF I had a broomstick, and knew how to ride it,
I'd fly through the windows when Jane goes to
tea,

And over the tops of the chimneys I'd guide it,
To lands where no children are cripples like
me ;

I'd run on the rocks with the crabs and the sea,
Where soft red anemones close when you touch ;
If I had a broomstick, and knew how to ride it,
If I had a broomstick—instead of a crutch !

WHEN MARY GOES WALKING

WHEN Mary goes walking
The Autumn winds blow,
The poplars they curtsey,
The larches bend low,
The oaks and the beeches
Their gold they fling down,
To make her a carpet,
To make her a crown !

THE GARDENER'S CAT

THE gardener's cat's called Mignonette,
She hates the cold, she hates the wet,
She sits among the hothouse flowers
And sleeps for hours and hours and hours.

She dreams she is a tiger fierce
With great majestic claws that pierce,
She sits by the hot-water pipes
And dreams about a coat of stripes ;

And in her slumbers she will go
And stalk the sullen buffalo,
And when he roars across the brake
She does not wink, she does not wake.

It must be perfectly immense
To dream with such magnificence,
And pass the most inclement day
In this indeed stupendous way.

THE GARDENER'S CAT

She dreams of India's sunny clime,
And only wakes at dinner-time,
And even then she does not stir
But waits till milk is brought to her.

How nice to be the gardener's cat,
She troubles not for mouse or rat,
But, when it's coming down in streams,
She sits among the flowers and dreams.

The gardener's cat would be the thing,
Her dreams are so encouraging ;
She dreams that she's a tiger, yet
She's just a cat called Mignonette !

.

The moral's this, my little man—
Sleep 'neath life's hailstones when you can,
And if you're humble in estate,
Dream splendidly, at any rate !

“ HOLD ”

I KNOW where Hampshire fronts the Wight,
A little church, where “after strife”
Reposes Guy de Blanquely, Knight,
By Alison his wife :
I know their features’ graven lines
In time-stained marble monotone,
While crouched before their feet reclines
Their little dog of stone !

I look where Blanquely Castle still
Frowns o’er the oak wood’s summer state,
(The maker of a patent pill
Has purchased it of late),
And then through Fancy’s open door
I backward turn to days of old,
And see Sir Guy—a bachelor
Who owns a dog called “Hold” !

I see him take the tourney’s chance,
And urge his coal-black charger on

“HOLD”

To an arbitrament by lance
For lovely Alison ;
I mark the onset, see him hurl
From broidered saddle to the dirt
His rival, that ignoble Earl—
Black-hearted Massingbert !

Then Alison, with down-dropped eyes,
Where happy tears bedim the blue,
Bestows a valuable prize
And adds her hand thereto ;
My lord, his surcoat streaked with sand,
Remounts, low muttering curses hot,
And with a base-born, hireling band
He plans a dastard plot !

.
'Tis night—Sir Guy has sunk to sleep,
The castle keep is hushed and still—
See, up the spiral stairway creep,
To work his wicked will,
Lord Massingbert of odious fame,
Soft followed by his cut-throat staff ;
Ah, “Hold” has justified his name
And pinned his lordship's calf !

“HOLD”

A growl, an oath, then torches flare ;
Out rings a sentry's startled shout ;
The guard are racing for the stair,
Half-dressed, Sir Guy runs out ;
On high his glittering blade he waves,
He gives foul Massingbert the point,
He carves the hired assassin knaves
Joint from plebeian joint !

.

The Knight is dead—his sword is rust,
But in his day I'm certain “Hold”
Wore, as his master's badge of trust,
A collarette of gold :
And still I like to fancy that,
Somewhere beyond the Styx's bound,
Sir Guy's tall phantom stoops to pat
His little phantom hound !

IN AN OLD NURSERY

A PRIM old room where memories stir
Through faded chintz and wall-paper,
Like bees along the lavender

Of some dim border ;
Bay-windowed, whence at close of day
You see the roosty starlings sway
High on the elm-tree's topmost spray
In gossip order.

In its quaint realm how soon one slips
Back to the age of treasure-ships,
The atmosphere of cowboy-trips
And boundless prairies ;
And when the red logs fret and fume
(They're lit to-night to air the room)
Here come a tip-toe in the gloom
Old nursery fairies.

Here come dear ghosts to him who sees—
Fat ghosts of long digested teas,
Thin little ghosts of "saying please,"
Big ghosts of birthdays,

IN AN OLD NURSERY

And sundry honourable sprites
To whisper those foredone delights
Of hallowe'ens and stocking-nights
And other mirth-days.

Its walls are full of musics drawn
From twitterings in the eaves at dawn,
From swish of scythe on summer lawn,
From Shetlands pawing
The gravel by the front-door yew,
And, wind-tossed from the avenue,
Fugues of first February blue
And rooks a-cawing.

Old room, the years have galloped on,
The days that danced, the hours that shone
Have turned their backs on you and gone
By ways that harden ;
But you—in you their gold and myrrh
And frankincense of dreams still stir
Like bees that haunt the lavender
Of some walled garden !

THE CUSTOM HOUSE

THE Custom House in Billingsgate
Is very large and very great,
All summer its electrics swish
To dissipate the smell of fish.

Outside the streets are glaring, grim,
Inside it's cool and wide and dim,
And all its rooms have swinging doors,
And disinfectants on the floors.

From its front windows one may see
The Thames as muddy as can be ;
Its clerks are very cross and sour,
And keep you waiting half-an-hour.

But you may watch the tramps go by
For Christiansund or Uruguay,
Or read, what most my fancy stirs,
The "Notices to Mariners."

THE CUSTOM HOUSE

These tell of buoys and lights and quays,
For those in "peril of the seas,"
They caution captains, and convict
The sunken shoal or derelict.

And as you read them you may reach
A Greenland floe, a coral beach,
The breeze that stirs the tamarinds,
Or rushing, grey Atlantic winds.

And so the Custom House, you see,
Seems quite a pleasant place to me ;
I won't mind waiting—no, not I,
For half-an-hour of hot July.

A BLACK-LETTER STORY- BOOK

IN dingy binding dark with time
And stately centuries of grime,
An offspring of that early prime
 When first Ambition
Set up, of minstrel's tale and rhyme,
 A print edition—

This, the old volume that you'll find
Dozing on upper shelves, resigned
To modern manners, and the mind
 That seldom heeds it
(Save as a marketable find)
 And never reads it.

So dull it looks by tales to-day,
For here no artist's paints portray
In elfin fancy, gnome or fay,
 Nor pencil stages
His light conceptions of the way
 Across its pages.

A BLACK-LETTER STORY-BOOK

Its day was earlier far, you see,
Than these—proved comrades though
they be—
Who fill a fire-lit “after tea”
From well-loved chalice,
With fairy, giant, and jinnee,
With Rip and Alice.

Yet if you plod and persevere
Along its leaded lines austere,
As an adventurer in drear,
Dark wildernesses,
You’ll learn to love the spelling queer,
The antic esses.

And find therein a promised land,
Where friends of a robuster brand,
Monks, archers, and a jolly band
Of knights and dragons,
Will toast your advent to their strand
In brimming flagons !

A STORY OF A, B, C

WHEN I'm going to town of a morning,
Every day I meet
Three little girls with grace adorning
The long, grey aisle of a London street
(The Saints be kind to their class-ward feet),
And I don't know what their names may be,
Never a one of all the three,
So we'll call them A and B and C.
And A's as slim as a willow,
And B's as nice as a bun,
And C's as pretty as sixpence,
And how shall the story run ?

They go in orchard, apple-green dresses
(Best of Pomona's hues),
They wear the sun in their pig-tailed tresses,
They wear the wind in their walking shoes ;
You wouldn't know which of the three to
choose.

A STORY OF A, B, C

Each of them fresh as an April day,
Each of them bright as a roundelay,
Each of them, C and B and A.

And A's the grace of a princess,
And B's as sweet as a rose,
And C, she's pretty as sixpence,
And that's how the story goes !

Now that's as far as my knowledge reaches,
Fancy finds the end,
"Sugar and spice" for all and each is
Always there when it's "Let's pretend";
So 'tis settled that Fate's to send
Sugar and spice to all the three
(Letting them know it comes from me),
Each of them, A and B and C.

And A shall marry a marquis,
And B shall marry a squire,
And C (who's pretty as sixpence)
Whomever her dreams desire !

MOON-FLOWERS

THE moon-flowers, the moon-flowers, to sleepy
splash of fountains

They open—grey and silver—when the stars
come overhead,

And if you'd go to Fairyland and find the Pea-
cock Mountains

You've got to pick the moon-flowers before you
go to bed.

Oh, would you go to Nineveh of ancient pomps
and palaces,

Or see the towers of Ascalon lift spire on aching
spire,

Or sup with Montezumas—golden plate and
jewelled chalices—

Or dip your pocket-handkerchief in purple vats
of Tyre?

Would you sail, a swart Phœnician,
On a buccaneering mission

MOON-FLOWERS

(Dig and drive and swing of oar-blades as the
plunging triremes go !)

Till the sea-rim gives the highlands
Of the fern-fringed Happy Islands ?
Ah, you've first to see the moon-flowers blow !

You've missed the Peacock Mountains through
the pearl-pink sea-fog shimmering,
The turkis-blue and opal that they bind about
their brows ;

You've missed the magic moorings where the
flying fish go glimmering
And painted dolphins leaping in the tide-rip
round the bows ;

For the bit of wedding-cake, you
Said was certain sure to take you,
Never got you any further on the road that you
should go

To the sapphire peaks and gorges
Than St. Peter's or St. George's,
And you'd never heard of moon-flowers—No !

The moon-flowers, the moon-flowers, when first
the twilight changes,

MOON-FLOWERS

They open—grey and silver—as the stars come
out a-row,
So if you'd go to Fairyland and see the Peacock
ranges,
You've first to face the twilight and watch the
moon-flowers blow !

TWILIGHT'S IN THE CORNERS

TWILIGHT's in the corners, the twilight and the
fire,

All its jolly marchers,

Men-at-arms and archers,

Clank across the carpet in most wonderful attire—

Cloak and jewelled dagger,

Plumes that sway and swagger,

As the knights come riding, each attended by
his squire :

And you hear the flutter as the silken pennons flit,

Hear a trumpet fanfare, and you long to follow it,

Where brown-eyed princesses bend from high
embattled towers,

Where in wondrous gardens flame the wondrous

Wishing Flowers,

And where, with knightly grit,

You a splendid lance may split,

With a brother of the dreamland, ere the school-
room lamp is lit !

TWILIGHT'S IN THE CORNERS

Magic through the fireguard, oh, wide and wide
it flings,

Tales of jousts and journeys,

Tales of trysts and tourneys,

Tales of monks and minstrels, and of fairy given
rings,

Wizard ways and witches,

Caves and buried riches,

Listed camps, and companies, and comradeship
of kings ;

Yes, but when they're leading out your charger
from his stall,

White is he as starlight, red-caparisoned and tall,
Just as you are mounting with a high and mighty
mien,

Lady Lucy's love gage o'er your helmet's
damascene,

With a crash the castles fall,

Jane has left the servants' hall,

And she's brought the schoolroom lamp in, and
the lamp has spoilt it all !

PETER PAN

AMONG the joys that winter brings,
Is going out and buying things.
When all the shops look warm and bright
With gas and with electric light,
Suggestive in their fine array
Of Santa Claus and Christmas Day,
And all the windows seem to try
To make you go inside and buy.
And when you're going home to tea,
It's nice—if you look up—to see
The stars that twinkle row by row,
All lit by half-past four or so ;
The very same that seldom peep
In summer till you've gone to sleep ;
It's nice to see them now instead
Of after you have gone to bed.
I do not mean, of course, that when
There's rain and fog you'll see them then.
Then you will watch the buses slide
And spatter mud on every side ;

PETER PAN

Perhaps you'll get some on your hair,
And if you do you will not care ;
And if it goes on nurse's dress,
You'll view the fact with cheerfulness ;
And if she gets it in her eye,
You'll simply thrill with ecstasy ;
And if it goes in yours, why then
She'll help to take it out again.
And when you take a cab or train,
From " Peter Pan," or Drury Lane—
When heads are full of fairy caves,
Of pirates and of Indian braves—
You'll see the lamps on every hand
Go swinging up and down the Strand,
And know that London town o' nights,
Is just as full of rich delights,
Of magic and of mystery,
As ever fairy cave could be :
Perhaps you'll find in after years
That London Town has toil and tears,—
Well, if you do, the wisest plan
Is just to visit " Peter Pan " !
But best of winter joys you'll find,
Is—when they've drawn the nursery blind—
To think before you go to bed,

PETER PAN

(When through the bars the fire grows red,
And dances on the painted shelves,
Until the very toys themselves
Seem quite alive, and dancing too),
About the lovely things you'll do,
When Spring puts on a wondrous dress
Of little yellow crocuses,
And whispers at the window-sills
Of hyacinths and daffodils !

ODD MOMENTS

THE FIRST FISHERMAN

BESIDE a vast and primal sea
A solitary savage he,

Who gathered for his tribe's rude need
The daily dole of raw sea-weed.

He watched the great tides rise and fall,
And spoke the truth—or not at all !

Along the awful shore he ran
A simple pre-Pelasgian ;

A thing primeval, undefiled,
Straightforward as a little child,—

Until one morn he made a grab
And caught a mesozoic crab !

THE FIRST FISHERMAN

Then—told the tribe at close of day
A bigger one had got away !

From him have sprung (I own a bias
To ways the cult of rod and fly has)
All fishermen—and Ananias !

A MARCH BROWN

ONCE more come clarion and blue-hearted dawns,
And Springtide plays her yearly hocus-pocus,
Her magic of high March that decks the lawns
With those her floral fays and leprechauns,
The yellow daff and the green sheathéd crocus—
When through the city softer winds envoke us
To where the streams run down,
And the stark fells above the birch-woods frown,
And you first move upon the waters, Mr. Brown !

A coy bacillus, fair ephemerid,
For some weeks past I've felt you in my being,
Till lately I have come on you amid
My daily toil, and softly you have slid
Across the half-writ page, till to my seeing
Have come green fields, and bosomed clouds
a-fleeing,
And mill-stream's foam-flecked fuss,
And banks of primrose, rathe, auriferous ;
“And thus,” I've said, “I'd cast your counterfeit,
and thus” ;

A MARCH BROWN

And rising, I have taken to me rods
From the retreat where they have been reclining
(Waiting your whisper, best of naiaint gods),
And idly I've withdrawn the brass-bound wads,
And built them up, the supple and the shining,
As men build hopes, and felt my fingers twining
In that whole-hearted squeeze,
Kept for tried friends and mates of ancient ease,
Round handles ardent from the southern cork-
wood trees !

Thus then I yield me to your influence,
Shy flutterer of the hill-stream and the river,
Thus does your primal message thrill each sense,
Your wings susurrant seem to call me hence
To grey keen waters where the catkins quiver,
And I, responsive, do acclaim you giver
Of these right god-sent spells
Of dancing streams and far-off waiting fells,
And stop to look up trains and write about
hotels.

.

When other men shall have the mind to praise
June's jovial bug of carnival and riot,

A MARCH BROWN

That blossoms with wild roses and red mays,
He the green-drake, who sets whole streams
 ablaze

With mottled monsters taking change of diet,
By pool and shallow, osier-bed or eyot,
I'll swear by Mr. Brown
Who, in his chill wan water's sober gown,
Is yearly first to bid me forth again from Town!

SPRING SALMON

It's oh, but I'm dreaming
Of grey water streaming,
Great rivers that go gleaming
 Where brown the heather blows,
Ere May's southern graces
Rub out the last white traces
From high and mountain places
 Of stubborn, storm-packed snows !

The chill wind that searches
The low-lying birches,
The old red grouse that perches
 And swaggers in the sun ;
I'm fain for its blowing,
I'm restless for his crowing,
And it's I that would be going
 Where the spring salmon run !

And oh, were they bulking
Bright silver, or sulking—
In the snow-broth a-skulking,
 I would care not at all,

SPRING SALMON

I'd hear the falls ringing,
I'd see the pine-tops swinging
In a wind that's filled with singing
When the green plover call !

TO A MAYFLY

(*Ephemera vulgaris*)

[“Golf occasionally has a very weakening effect on fly-fishers, and is a thing to be fought against.”—*Daily Paper*.]

HAMPSHIRE woods are in summer’s keeping,
Sunshine’s sleeping
 On banks of may,
Spring has taken her smiles and weeping
 Over the hills and far away !

Now, Ephemera, now you gladden
Streams, and madden
 The morning rise ;
Craftiest monsters now are had on
 By the veriest tyro’s flies !

Now from memory’s mist and vapours
Gut that tapers,
 By Fancy thrown,
Drops you here on my books and papers—
 Gossamer wraith—so lightly blown !

TO A MAYFLY

Till I see in your green-coat flicker
Brooks that bicker

And streams that swell ;
And an elderly pulse goes quicker
Under your old-time magic spell !

Far too long on the links I've striven,
Tee'd and driven,

(And cursed mishap !)
Far too long has my time been given
To the cult of my handicap !

Has my wrist for your gentler science
Still compliance

To work my will ?
Can I look for the old reliance
In its flexible easy skill ?

Or has Philistine usage rusted
Tendons trusted

Of old to ply,
When your delicate legions dusted
Pool and shallow—the green-drake fly ?

TO A MAYFLY

Ha ! the ruler I deftly dandle—
Claims of Vandal

Amusements flee,

As it turns to a split-cane handle—

Wait till Saturday, then you'll see !

THE UNATTAINABLE

I KNOW a pool where the river,
 Sunlit and still,
Slips by a bank of wild roses
 Down from the mill ;
There do I linger when summer makes glorious
 Valley and hill.

Somewhere the song of a skylark
 Melts into air,
Butterflies float through the sunshine,
 June's everywhere ;
Nature in fact, shows an amiable jollity
 I do not share.

For in the shade of the alders,
 Scornful of flies,
There is a trout that no cunning
 Coaxes to rise,
Sly as Ulysses, and doubtful as Didymus,
 Mammoth in size.

And when the Mayfly battalions
 Flutter and skim,

THE UNATTAINABLE

When all the others are filling
 Baskets abrim,
I spend the cream of a fisherman's carnival
 Casting at him ;

Seeing in fancy my hackle
 Seized with a flounce,
Hearing the reel racing madly
 Under his pounce,
Knowing at last all the pounds of his magnitude—
 (Eight of an ounce !)

But of my drakes and my sedges
 None make the kill,
None tempt him up from his fastness
 Under the mill,
And, for I saw him as lately as Saturday,
 There he is still.

Thus do Life's triumphs elude us,
 Yet it may be
Some afternoon, when the keeper
 Goes to his tea,
That, if a lob-worm were dropped unofficially—
 Well, we shall see.

TO AN OLD FRIEND

THE end draws near again, and very near,
The first few fluttered beech leaves fall and
gleam—

Light skirmishers that dog the dying year—
But still I see you down below the weir,
A shadow in the stream !

Here have you lurked since spring, in sportive
guise,
Rallied the meadows to young April's rout,
Here first I marked the marvel of your size,
Here wooed you with each fleeting season's
flies—
O alderman of trout !

Here, when the madcap cuckoo made his mock,
And the rathe wild-rose blushed in earliest June,
The day the mayfly hatched above the lock—
You nearly had it, didn't you, old cock,
Save that you stopped too soon ?

TO AN OLD FRIEND

Here have I waited as the dawn spread high,
Hoping in vain the prejudice or pique
That makes you—obviously—reject a fly
Would send you hurtling through the startled
fry

To grab a proffered bleak !

Here likewise have my steps at eve been drawn,
And, as the moon made way behind the wood
(The same old moon that watched the hunting
faun),

I've found the lob-worm garnered from the-lawn
Did just as little good !

And now the end is near ; we part a space,
You to your mud and I to mine—in town ;
May Easter find us at the trysting-place,
There where the dancing bubbles spin and race,
To meet the first March Brown !

TO A KINGFISHER

ST. PETER was a fisherman, a fisherman was he,
He killed his fish right handsomely in gentle
Galilee,
As you and I would do, my friend, from Severn
unto Dee !

He always acted sportsmanlike though Luck she
scowled or laughed,
He'd throw into a ten-knot breeze as though it
blew abaft,
And you and I are proud to be of that his
ancient craft !

It's not in any book I've read—but still it may
have been
That you have perched beside his lines, so
shiny-eyed and keen,
A little apt disciple in a coat of blue and
green !

TO A KINGFISHER

And since he *was* a fisherman, the brightest
bird that flies
He vowed to other fishermen who cast 'neath
colder skies,
To light their river-banks, that they his name
might recognize !

Oh, I was up last Saturday by Thames's amber
brown,
While yet the oak and elm they wore the night's
grave misty gown,
And saw you like an emerald go flashing up and
down !

And as it seemed for fishermen that life was
passing good,
I lit a little candle at St. Peter's-in-the-Wood,
Or if I didn't actually, I think he understood !

THE MYTH

(A Thames Trout)

WHERE the bulrushes grow ranker
 (Oh, the long green spears a-gleam !)
There the punt shall rock at anchor
 In the stream ;
By the weir's cool curve of thunder,
By the stones where wagtails plunder
 Foolish daddy-long-leg flies,
And the strings of rainbow bubbles in a rhapsody
 arise !

Hours may pass and hours go fleeting,
 You shall heed them not, but stay
Lost to them, and all the sweeting
 Of the may ;
For beneath the swelling current
Where the midge-cloud hangs susurrant,
 And the sweeping swallows go,
Lives a most prodigious monster, lurking learnedly
 and low !

THE MYTH

No ! I've never really seen him,
 But the boatman tells a tale
Of a something (" must 'a' been 'im ")
 Like a whale,
On the shelving shallow showing
" Where them kingcups is a-growing,"
 Only just the other night,
And the frightened fry went leaping from the
 Presence left and right !

But a crafty old curmudgeon
 He must be, for ne'er a fin
Does he move for any gudgeon
 That you spin ;
With a wink he maybe watches
'Neath the willow-root's dark notches
 As you toil with aching wrist,
But the landing-net's no nearer, nor the deft
 taxidermist !

But the skies are smiling bluely,
 There is shade along the shore,
And the chestnut's litten newly
 Lamps a score ;

THE MYTH

Drop the rod then and be thankful
For the sights that fill the bank full—
 Verdant meads and ancient stems
And the broad paternal bigness and the peace
 of Father Thames !

ANCESTORS

“SEPTEMBER ! Come out, 'tis September,
The moon of the hunter is young,”
This style, as perhaps you remember,
Stamped songs that our grandpapas sung :
I can see the old boys, in their day-time's
December,
But ruddy as pippins and mighty of lung !

I can see the green coats and white beavers,
The guns (the old flint-lock affair),
The cockers they used as retrievers
To pick up their partridge or hare ;
No beaters to bungle, no bag-making fevers
Destroy the old-fashioned repose of their air !

I see them come down by the spinney,
They measure and ram in their lead,
Then start through the turnips, with “Prinny”
And “Dash” working gaily ahead ;

ANCESTORS

If a covey is flushed I would wager a guinea
They'll aim for a minute—but kill their birds
dead !

They go with their old-world precision,
Their quaintness of garb and of gun,
Till out of my day-dreaming vision
They fade in the slant of the sun ;
Let's hope they are tramping o'er manors Elysian,
With asphodel-cover to give 'em good fun !

MY WOODCOCK

I stood in the ride, and the glamour
Of autumn was gold on the trees,
While the far-away beaters' faint clamour
Was borne on the whispering breeze,
When the voices that came through the cover
With the tapping of stick upon stock,
Rang out with a roar—"Woodcock over!
Cock forward! Mark cock!"

Like a leaf of last year that is lifted
When March is in maddest of moods,
Through the tops of the beeches he drifted,
A little brown ghost of the woods:
Bombarded with passionate vigour,
He lazily dodged down the line,
And I knew, as I pressed on the trigger,
I *knew* he was mine!

My pulses may fade and grow duller,
My eyesight may weaken, but still

MY WOODCOCK

I shall see the soft pinion's warm colour,
The length of that insolent bill ;
And, till age leaves me withered and one-eyed
At the ultimate end of my road,
I shall hear the click-click of the gun I'd
Omitted to load !

WILD GEESE

THEY'RE shy as the otter, they're sly as the fox,
They're worse to approach than the craftiest
hind,
You may freeze on the fore-shore or crouch on
the rocks,
You may soak in the sea-fog or wait in the
wind,
Though their magical music will give you no
peace,
Yet your bag shall go empty, for aren't they
wild geese ?

Honk-honk, honk-honk, the distant voices clank it ;
The wet retriever trembles at your knee ;
For he hears the lone notes falling,
Where the long grey tides are crawling,
Through the shouting west wind's buffets or the
dripping fog's chill blanket,
As the wild geese come shoreward from the
sea !

WILD-GEESE

You may stalk them at sundown, at dawning's
first flame,

They've ears for the wariest, softest of treads,
And, stook-time or snow-time, the end is the
same—

A picket gives warning and up go their heads :
Yes, your boots (wet as sponges in spite of their
grease)

You may wear to brown paper in chasing wild
geese !

Yet still, *honk-honk*, a northern charm shall fold
you,

Though Shot shall shake the raindrops from his
sides,

Though you catch the drifting clamour
Through the sleet squall's sting and
hammer,

Still the flight shall work its magic and the
breathless stalk shall hold you,

When the grey geese come calling off the tides !

DIRGE TO A DEAD OWL

[“ Most proprietors nowadays strictly preserve these beautiful and useful birds.” —*Natural History*.]

SILENT, mysterious, on wings of down,
A swift, deceptive presence in the cover,
Vaguely irresolute, soft-breasted, brown,
Bird of Minerva, tawny-eyed moon-lover,
You faced the sunshine mid the fir-trees gaunt,
Roused by the beaters' distant sticks a-tapping,
From some sequestered, hidden, noontide haunt,
Where doubtless you'd been napping.

Now all that's mortal of you, limp and dead,
Lies where a few pale, floating plumes still fly
 light ;
Your little ghost, I like to think, has sped
To the dim nether world of endless twilight,
(Fit paradise for one who loved full well
The empty dark, those shores forlorn, abhorrent,)
To sail for ever o'er the asphodel,
By Styx's gloomy torrent !

DIRGE TO A DEAD OWL

Meanwhile with hasty hands the mould I'll
heap

Over your warm, uncaring, earthly habit,

Over the pinions that no more may sweep

Upon the unsophisticated rabbit ;

Lost to the daylight (which you couldn't brook,

You loathed that sunrise bore, the dull but good
cock),

None of the guns shall guess that I mistook

You for the sweepstakes woodcock.

TO A DECEMBER GROUSE

(Heard from the smoking-room)

NAY, is it now you'd have me take the hill,
Voice from the snow line, far away and mocking?
In August, well, you might have roused a thrill,
But now, when sleet showers drive and pines
are rocking

In the keen north-east wind,
I find

The cheery hearth and a dry boot and stocking
More to my mind
Than the wet mountain and your wild cok-
coking !

In August, yes, 'twas doubtless vastly well,
When butterflies and bees and guns together
Made holiday in dingle and in dell,
To seek you 'mid a charm of sky and weather,
With a fair interlude
For food,

TO A DECEMBER GROUSE

In sunshine that could tan one's cheeks to
leather,

Before I strewed

Again your youthful kind upon the heather !

I know the game to-day—the snow, the blast
Down which the swinging packs will whirr and
whizz hard,

I'd hear your ramping pinions whistle past,
And—I should miss you, nipped of nose and
gizzard,

And drain the futile dram,
And damn

The braes, the bleakness, and the brutal blizzard,
For oh, I am
A chilly thing and “meagre as a lizard” !

I come not at your challenge, haughty bird !
Let the more earnest and the harder bitten,
If they should choose to make themselves absurd,
Compass your end in mackintosh and mitten ;

I find my sole desire

The fire,

And this great padded chair which now I sit on,
Nor shall I tire

Of pipes and papers and the Persian kitten !

THE PERENNIAL RABBIT

THE savage by primeval Thames,
Lurking, the mammoth to waylay,
Amid the awful forest stems,
On some far, dim, forgotten day,
As that vast bulk of brawn and beef
Squelched off unscathed through lone morasses,
Would turn, I doubt not, with relief
To where you scuttled in the grasses !

Perhaps my cave-man blood's to blame,
For—atavistic taint—I too
Have dropped a more exacting game,
Bunny, to have a bang at you ;
The driven partridge missed in front,
And eke behind, lacks serious merit
Beside a sunny hedgerow hunt,
A terrier and an active ferret !

Give me a summer afternoon,
An air-gun and the drone of bees,

THE PERENNIAL RABBIT

The water-meadows lush with June,
A stalk among the Alderneys ;
Then, hit or miss, I care no-ways,
In such surroundings I consider
You're worth a hundred storm-swept braes
And all the royals in Balquidder !

Indeed, wherever I may go,
Through summer woods, by wintry fell,
I've found you, in the sun or snow,
A friendly little Ishmael ;
Along the southern trout-stream banks,
Or with the ptarmigan consorting,
You've always earned my grateful thanks,
And in all seasons acted sporting !

Hushed is the hairy mammoths' roar
And gone the mastodon uncouth
Down to decay with dinosaur,
Aurochs, and fearsome sabre-tooth ;
But you, small beast in hodden-gray,
Survive, and will, I take for granted,
Be here when I am dust, to play
In moonlit covers still unplanted !

AN EMPTY SADDLE

Down the hill path echo the hoof-beats hollow,
The empty saddle sways ;
Sadly the road that weary feet must follow
Winds through the darkling braes.

Soft fall the clansman voices, hushed, complete in
A pathos worse than woe ;
Meet tongue indeed to murmur of defeat in—
The Gaelic, gentle, low !

Up in the cliffs the raven cries for slaughter,
The caustic croaking mocks
A beaten man whose heart is in the water
That squelches in his socks.

Bird of ill omen, sombre and accurst one,
Be still upon your crag,
You surely don't suppose that I'm the first one
Who missed a rotten stag ?

KINGS AND CUBBING

THEY built rosy castles,
And big, winged bulls,
And red-robed wizards
Worked miracles,
When the kings rode hunting
With javelin and bow
Down the road to Nineveh
A long time ago !

They sat on their saddles
As good men sit,
Long in the stirrup,
Light on the bit,
Their proud lips a-curling,
Their crimped beards just so,
Down the road to Nineveh
A long time ago !

And what did they ride for ?
Great beasts of stress

KINGS AND CUBBING

Lithe and tremendous—
Lions ! no less !
The big black-maned beauties
That prowled to and fro
Down the road to Nineveh
A long time ago !

For why should we doubt it ?
Still does each chief
Fill them with arrows—
In bas-relief,
And fine rough-and-tumbles
The grim carvings show
Down the road to Nineveh
A long time ago !

Then hear us, O Nimrod,
That we may find
Heart such as theirs was
(Jumps still are blind) ;
Send cubs stout as lions,
The sort they laid low
Down the road to Nineveh
A long time ago !

TO A FOX-CUB

You slipped through the hedgerow's high tangle
of bramble,

You knew of the gap by the hazel-tree's trunk,
As sharp as a needle, as red as a Campbell,
Surprised, very likely, but not in a funk ;
Demure as a kitten, yet wise and hard-bitten,
You pricked a keen ear to the crash in the scrub,
Where Grateful and Glitter had stirred up the
litter,

O bandit beginner—O cool little cub !

You went like a dream, yet an eye of cold
yellow

You cocked in a crafty but confident glance,
As much as to tell me, "Now, be a good fellow,
Say nothing about it and give us a chance ;
Those lashing white ladies can gallop like Hades,
They'd slate me—at present—in less than a
mile ;

I'm small, I'm a baby, sit quiet, and maybe
I'll live to reward you with something worth
while !"

TO A FOX-CUB

Discreetly I watched you dive under the double ;
I moved not an eyelid, I give you my word ;
If out of the belt by the ten-acre stubble
A jay screamed a menace, well, nobody heard ;
For far in the whinny, green depths of the
spinney

A brother, ill-fated, was biting the mud,
Borne down in a flurry of furies that worry
And bristle and clamour for blood, and for blood !

And so it's a bargain, my boy, you'll remember ;
Some day we shall ask you to settle the bill,
Some soft, misty day in a distant December,
When you, a great dog-fox, glide out down the
hill :

They'll find you by noonlight, and run you till
moonlight,

And I would be with them the whole of the
day,

By brook and by village, by grass-land and tillage,
To lose you, or eat you, a county away !

“ THE LITTLE FOXES ”

THIS was a wisdom that Solomon said
In a garden of citron and roses red,
A word he wove, where his grey apes played,
In the rhyme he strung for love of a maid ;
 Thus went his learning, most discerning,
 Thus he sang of his old designs,
“ Take us the foxes—little foxes,
 Little dog-foxes that spoil the vines ! ”

(Though Solomon never since he was born
Had heard the twang of a huntsman's horn,
Killing his foxes, so I'll be bound,
Without the help of a horse or hound,
 Still down the ages, this his sage's
 Word with gallanter meaning shines,
When we take foxes, little foxes,
 Little dog-foxes that spoil the vines !)

So when the morn hangs misty now
Where the grass shows never a patch of plough,

“THE LITTLE FOXES”

Hark to the cry on the spruce-crowned hill,
For Solomon's wisdom is working still ;
Hark to the singing voices flinging,
White sterns waving among the pines,
All for the foxes—little foxes,
Little dog-foxes that spoil the vines.

The lift of a cap at the cover side,
A thud of hoofs in a squelchy ride,
And the pack is racing a breast-high scent
Like a shadow cloud o'er a windy bent !
Customer cunning—full of running,
Never a moment the game declines ;
Thus are the foxes—little foxes,
Little dog-foxes that spoil the vines.

So it's afternoon, and eight miles away
That beat, dead-weary and stiff with clay
A tired mask, set for a distant whin,
Is wheeled on Death with a brigand grin !
There by the paling, wet brush trailing,
Still he bares them his lips' long lines ;
So die the foxes—little foxes,
Little dog-foxes that spoil the vines.

“THE LITTLE FOXES”

This was the wisdom that Solomon made
In a garden of citron and almug shade,
That a man and a horse might find them fun
Wherever the little dog-foxes run,
 Since of his meaning we've been gleaning,
 Since we've altered his old designs,
All about foxes—little foxes,
 Little dog-foxes that spoil the vines !

JANE—A TERRIER

SHE's short in the leg and she's long in the jaw,
And the roof of her mouth is as black as your
 hat,
With her rough little coat and her round little
 paw,
She's a rum 'un, is Jane, at fox, otter, or rat ;

 She's the hardest from Bedale to Bicester,
 In holt or in earth or in drain,
 And she sticks just as close as a blister,
 Does good little sister Jane.

She never was willing to learn as a pup
To "die for her country " or carry your stick,
And she always sat down when you bade her
 "sit up,"
But she's clever as sin, and she's thunder-bolt
 quick,

 And the heaviest badger'll shirk her,
 The biggest dog-fox bolt amain ;

JANE—A TERRIER

She's a wasp for her weight, she's a
worker,
Is good little sister Jane !

At night, when she's curled in her place by the
fire,
She cocks you a wicked and earth-reddened eye,
To say that her badger "sat up" by desire,
That a hoary buck-rat in the hedge did the
"die,"

And she twitches and whines and
remembers,
And tackles 'em over again,
Rolled up end to end by the embers,
Does good little sister Jane !



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